DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 190 572 SP 016 546

AUTHOR Nasca, Donald F.
TITLE A Behavioral Model for Educational Change.
NOTE 15p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adoption (Ideas); *Attitude Change; *Behavior Change; *Change Strategies; *Instructional Innovation; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Behavior; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

The acquisition of new teaching behaviors requires a personal commitment based on freely choosing to attend to, practice, and finally integrate newly acquired behaviors into an already established teaching philosophy. Significant attitude or behavior change can be accomplished through a five step development process that focuses on awareness, commitment, examination of defined behaviors, practicing behaviors, and integration of behaviors into a classroom setting. (Author/CJ)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED190572

# A Behavioral Model for Educational Change

Donald F. Nasca

State University College of New York

Bureau of Educational Field Services

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Donald F. Nasca

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

SP 016 546

Abstract

Effective educational change is defined as change that directly impacts upon the learner as contrasted with organizational change that merely alters the relative position of time, space, and/or personnel, requires a well planned, systematic program of attitude modification. The acquisition of new teaching behaviors requires a personal commitment based on freely choosing to attend to, practice, and finally, integrate newly acquired behaviors into an already established teaching philosophy. Significant educational change can be accomplished through a five stage development process that focuses on awareness, commitment, examination of defined behaviors, practicing behaviors and finally integrating behaviors into a classroom setting.

Educational change is defined in this article as the acquisition of new teaching behaviors directly impacting upon the learner as contrasted with organizational change, e.g. modular scheduling, team teaching, etc. that merely alters the relative position of time, space, and/or personnel.

## The Problem

Our record of planned and systematic adoption of educational change has not been overwhelmingly impressive. If documented evidence is required to support this commonly experienced phenomena, one needs only look at a Rand report (Berman et al., 1975) chronicling the impact of federally funded programs during recent years. This report, as experience demonstrates, illustrates how grandiose plans for educational change generally fall far short of their intended goals. A plan to individualize, for example, more often than not ends up with a slight increase in the number of small groups. Or, a plan to humanize educational programs in a district terminates with one course in values clarification at the secondary level and use of magic circles in a few elementary classrooms.

It seems that a major problem contributing to our failure to implement educational change is an erroneous assumption that knowledge about planned change is sufficient to bring about the desired change. Like the experienced farmer, however, who after sitting through a lecture by a young agricultural expert, replied,

"Listen Sonny, I already know how to farm a lot better than I do!" there are a lot of teachers who already know how to teach a lot better than they do. One might ask then, "Why don't they?" Although the easy answer is often, "Lack of serious commitment," the real reason is gleaned from looking at relationships among knowledge, attitudes, and behavior.

Knowledge of how to engage in a particular behavior and actual behaving represent two stages in the change process. A disparity between these two stages occurs when knowing what to do conflicts with some already well-established behavior. For example, knowledge about the danger of smoking modifies the smoking behavior of only a very few individuals. Similarly, knowledge about the effectiveness of positive reinforcement is insufficient to modify the behavior of a teacher who customarily employs punishment. Or, knowledge about non-directive teaching strategies is, although necessary, certainly not sufficient to change the behavior of a directive teacher. The distinction between knowledge and behaving has been described by researchers in terms of symbolic and actual adoption of an innovation. Symbolic adoption is defined as knowing the language of an innovation and verbalizing its characteristics while actual adoption is reflected in overt, observable behaviors consistent with the innovation. All too often educators have focused on symbolic adoption of innovative practices while assuming that actual adoption, that is, behavioral change, would naturally follow. This is not necessarily true and

as experience has often tended to show, is seldom the case.

Behaving appears to be a manifestation of attitude, or stated differently, an overt sign of what one believes. Attitudes are not easily altered. Attitude change can occur only if individuals freely choose to attend to and accept the implications of change. An environment that facilitates free choice followed by detailed definitions of new behaviors appears to be necessary for effective education change. Without this environment, behavioral change, the ultimate goal of innovative adoption, is unlikely to occur. Not only does it appear that knowledge (Symbolic adoption) in and of itself, is insufficient to modify attitudes, but unfortunately, knowledge continues to be the most frequently available source of impetus for educational change. Viable alternatives to the knowledge-based approach have been vigorously proposed but the frequency of behavioral models in existing staff development programs is still sufficiently scarce to suggest that the problem has not been solved.

## A Solution

The solution addresses two primary issues, free choice and behavioral change. Free choice is defined in terms of effective domain behaviors and behavioral change results from a systematic and sequential process that proceeds through knowledge, comprehension, and application. The model is operationalized in the five stages of:

1. General awareness - What is the innovation intended to accomplish and how does if function?
2. Personal commitment - Do I want to explore further the implications of adopting this new (different) practice?
3. Behaviors defined - Precise definition of teacher behavior inherent in the new (different) practice.
4. Behaviors practiced - Opportunity for teachers to practice new behaviors.
5. Behaviors refined - Opportunity for teachers to gain feedback on the use of new behaviors when used in a natural setting.

Cognitive and affective behaviors associated with each of the five stages are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Behavioral Change Staff Development Model

Characterized by

| Stages | Cognitive Characteristics | Affective Characteristics |
|---|---|---|
| 1. General Awareness | 1. Knowledge - The participant demonstrates acquisition of information about educational practices not currently being used by the participant. | 1. Receiving - The participant demonstrates willingness to attend to stimuli describing the parameters of an innovative process. |
| 2. Personal Commitment | 2. Comprehension - The participant demonstrates understanding of the innovation by restating key elements in a personalized language. | 2. Responding - The participant demonstrates a feeling of satisfaction (or lack of satisfaction) with the innovation as manifested in questions about its adoption and a decision to accept or reject the innovation. |
| 3. Behaviors Defined | 3. Comprehension - The participant demonstrates understanding of behaviors inherent in the innovation model by describing them in detail. | 3. Receiving - The participant freely chooses to attend to selected stimuli in an innovative model. |
| 4. Behaviors Practiced | 4. Application - The participant demonstrates application of knowledge by practicing new teaching behaviors. | 4. Responding - The participant freely chooses to exhibit behaviors specified in the innovation. |
| 5. Behaviors Refined | 5. Application - The participant demonstrates integration of new teaching behaviors into daily practice. | 5a. Valuing - The behaviors specified within the innovation are demonstrated with sufficient consistency to be perceived as an internalized value.<br>5b. Organization - Newly acquired behaviors are integrated into an already existing philosophy of teaching and a system of compatability emerges. |

General Awareness

Teachers are introduced to educational innovations through a variety of existing channels including professional literature, workshops, conferences and visitations. Innovations generally carry with them implications for new ways of behaving in the classroom. Absence of any such implications for teacher behavior would probably indicate that the practice is not really an innovation destined to impact upon the learner but would rather by an organizational change. If the practice is indeed an innovation requiring new behaviors, then teachers must be expected to attend to details of the new behaviors, practice the behaviors, and integrate them into their own classroom setting. This series of activities leading to a change requires considerable effort, attention, and time commitment on the part of the teacher. Such a commitment is likely to occur only if the individual teacher feels that the innovation meets some relevant personal need. The purpose of a general awareness stage is to present enough information for teachers to make preliminary judgements about the adoption of behaviors specified by the innovative practice.

Personal Commitment

Personal commitment is something given only through free choice. Only the individual teacher can make this choice and stage two of a behavioral change model requires the opportunity for individual teachers to clarify the implications of integrating

new practices into their own philosophy. Personal commitment often requires a process similar to value clarifying and/or individual exploration in cooperation with other teachers who have already adopted the new behaviors. Commitment may emerge because a teacher recognizes a need for something new and different or it may arise because the teacher recognizes positive values inherent in a new behavior. Regardless of the source, commitment is absolutely essential if the teacher is to attend to the detail inherent in stage three; the time and effort required in stage four, and the exposure required in stage five.

Teachers who have freely chosen to adopt the innovation will be likely to manifest this decision in stage two through clarifying questions and attempts to rephrase and restructure the behaviors into their own frames of reference. Teachers who have reservations about the adoption are likely to introduce numerous reasons why the innovation is inappropriate. If pressed into the innovation, these teachers are unlikely to seriously attend to later stages in the change process and even though they may achieve a stage of symbolic adoption, will never reach actual adoption. This is a function of freely choosing to attend to details required in the innovation.

Behaviors Defined

Behaviors inherent in any educational innovation must be clearly delineated if teachers are expected to adopt the innovation. Behavioral specifications may be defined verbally or presented

visually. Visual definitions may occur live, filmed, or video-taped. All too often, educational practices are too vaguely defined for successful replication. The Far West, Mini-Course (Macmillan, 1978) program provides an excellent model for well defined teacher behaviors in several series of filmed programs that precisely define and illustrate new teaching behaviors. Although certainly effective, this approach is costly and may not be required for all innovative practices. Verbal definitions, if clearly organized, may be sufficient to convey the needed information about innovative behavior to "committed teachers." i.e., teachers who have freely chosen to attend to these definitions. The format for defining, describing and presenting behaviors will depend upon the complexity of the behavior, resources available to develop models and generalizability of the innovation. New teaching behaviors presented in Gordon's (1974) T.E.T. model, for example, have been well defined at the verbal level.

Behaviors Practiced

Once new behaviors are clearly comprehended by teachers, then opportunities to practice the behaviors are required. Initial attempts to replicate new behaviors may be awkward, hesitant, and even incorrect. Non-threatening environments conducive to trial and error exploration are required. Simulation, role playing, micro-teaching, and/or working with small groups of students all provide opportunities for this type of practice. The Macmillan mini-course programs recommend video-taping of teaching behavior followed by

comparing these practice performances with the standard presented in stage three.

Behaviors Refined

New behaviors may be taken into the classroom and integrated with ongoing practices once the teacher has demonstrated a feeling of security with new behaviors in non-threatening situations. Some external feedback will generally be required at this point to validate that isolated behaviors developed as a function of the innovation are being applied consistently when combined with a broader range of the teachers already well-established behaviors. Video and audio recordings as well as systematic classroom observations may be used to supply this necessary feedback. An important part of the feedback process is its distinct separation from any supervisory or personnel evaluation strategies. The process of behavioral change requires personal risk-taking that is facilitated by a supportive atmosphere rather than an evaluative one.

## Discussion

This five-stage staff development model has been used in a variety of in-service settings by the Bureau of Educational Field Services at the State University College at Brockport. Its effectiveness is dependent upon several factors. First, school administration must be open to supporting alternatives within the district and/or individual buildings. Rarely is one specific innovative practice suitable for all teachers at all levels within a district or even one building. Any one group of teachers is likely to possess

a range of personal and professional philosophies, some of which are compatible with the innovation and some antithetical to it. Trying to coerce those who are antithetical is not only a waste of time but can be counter-productive. Second, personnel effected by planned change must feel free to accept or reject the change. Only those staff members freely choosing to adopt the innovation can be expected to expend the time and energy necessary to make the new program work. Third, new behaviors prescribed by the innovation must be clearly delineated with sufficient opportunity for practice and feedback. And finally, feedback must be provided by personnel not affiliated with any evaluation or administrative duties.

Our experience in applying the model has demonstrated that effective educational change is a time-consuming process requiring well-planned, incremental stages of development. We have found that when the model is carried out as prescribed, new behaviors impacting upon the learning of students are acquired by teachers. Unexpectedly, the value of this model as a method of introducing change into the educational process has increased substantially during the past few years for two reasons. First, the placement of new teachers has been sharply reduced and innovative practices developed and disseminated through pre-service teacher training programs are not reaching the schools. And second, a large majority of currently-employed teachers have met all permanent certification and continuing appointment requirements and

innovative practices that were at one time introduced through graduate programs are no longer being transferred into practice. A voluntary in-service training model is currently the only viable means for introducing permanent change into public school systems.

## References

Berman, P. & Pauly, E.W. Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change. Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 1975. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 190 324)

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development. Mini-Course. New York: Macmillan, 1978.

Gordon, T. Teacher Effectiveness Training. New York: Peter H. Wyden, 1974.